

My Fiction and You

Andy Kassier, Bianca Kennedy & The Swan Collective,
Britta Thie, Mikka Wellner



Opening: 11/07/19, 7 pm
Exhibition: 11/08/19 – 01/26/20

The exhibition »My Fiction and You« investigates how fiction and imagination create their own reality, to what extent they become collectivized and merge with our social surroundings. How powerfully do our imaginary notions of life overlap with reality, and how do they guide our actions and dominate us? The site-specific installations explore the relationship between fiction and the alter ego. The exhibition also questions to what degree the related concept of individual freedom might itself be an illusion. In their various inquiries into real and imaginary identities, the artists Andy Kassier, Britta Thie, Bianca Kennedy and The Swan Collective, and Mikka Wellner refer to the transfer and transformation of analogue life into the digital present and formulate what are, at times dystopian future scenarios.

A provocative self-presentation, for instance, addresses the mode of operation and spectacular persuasive power of a profit-oriented individual and what role the viewer's desires and expectations play. References from pop culture and film history combine with reflections on the physiological foundations of seeing to create a sculptural and site-specific installation. Processes of »gamification« become visible when elements of a digital game are transferred into an analogous environment, where game and everyday life literally overlap. In the process, issues of commercializing one's own image and »trading«, in other words »doing business« with one's own persona in social media, are addressed. Last but not least, virtual Kafkaesque metamorphoses question our status and our future here on Earth. At present, the housing market situation of many major cities looks anything but relaxed. Affordable housing is in short supply, and rents are high despite rent control laws, which provide legal loopholes for judicially well-positioned real estate companies. The steady progress of gentrification is seemingly unstoppable.

A symptom of misguided housing policies is the construction boom in condominiums. Luxury apartments still count among the prestigious possessions of a wealthy »elite«. A resulting scenario in the future could be that politicians no longer have control over the precarious shortage of living space. In addition to the recent problem of a housing shortage on one side of the social divide, there is also a rapidly increasing demand for residential properties among the wealthy. The situation is escalating and there is nothing to stop investors and real estate agents from homing in on new objects: cultural spaces are expected

to become luxury apartments. Institutions of art and culture have long become relics of our civilization's past: this is the vision **Andy Kassier** explores in the role of a provocateur for whom everything is a means to maximizing profits. In his installation work *Kassier Trust*, he plays a successful real estate broker. Using video and large-scale posters, he advertises the Bärenzwinger, a luxury property under construction, which one can view on site. In this work, Kassier plays with the desires and greed of a small »elite« who want everything, at any price, and are prepared to do anything to obtain it. »Spectacular lies don't need to be perfect. They rely less on the liar's skill than on the listener's expectations and wishes.« (Siri Hustvedt)

Bianca Kennedy and The Swan Collective present an immersive installation that gives visitors a new identity. Their work is experienced through two relatively new technologies, virtual reality (VR), in which reality is experienced virtually in a computer-simulated environment, and Augmented Reality (AR), a mix of VR and physical reality. The title *ANIMALIA SUM: I am an animal. I eat animals.* sounds like a statement and at the same time reveals a conflict. After putting on the VR glasses, one takes a big interactive step back in terrestrial ranking and is catapulted into the body of a beetle. This Kafkaesque media-induced metamorphosis illustrates how we might soon become dependent on these tiny creatures if we don't change our ecological practices and attitude soon. »In the AR work, looking into a digital distorting mirror causes an antenna and insect jaw to grow, while the human being is inevitably perceived as an aggressor in this scenario.«

Through the artists' virtual interventions, the audience sees through the eyes of an insect and is given a special ability to empathize. Among other things, the insects here plead for the consumption of whale meat. Why should a single whale be worth more than a billion friendly beetles?

Large-scale portraits of teenagers hang on the walls. Upon entering the room, multiple pairs of eyes follow the viewer. The images' science fiction and fantasy aesthetic is reminiscent of the so-called »trading cards games«. A well-known example of this genre is the game *Magic: The Gathering*, created in 1993. Analogue card games like

these are extremely popular not only because of their fixed rules, decks, quests, countless fairy-tale creatures, spells, artifacts, heroes (Planeswalkers), and »Mana«, but also because collecting, swapping, and trading in these playing cards develop their own dynamism and fascination.

In her installation, *POWERBANKS*, video artist **Britta Thie** presents an oversized version of a playable elaborately designed complete deck of cards. For the work, Thie has drawn from the protagonists of her latest film production of the same name, which will be screened in the exhibition's supporting program. The individual characters have been transferred from the film directly to the card deck, i.e. from the digital to the analogue, and have taken on a new identity. The card players, in turn, collectively live out the fiction presented to them. In a reference to today's art market, the cards allude to the handling of art goods and the practices of collecting and acquiring. Additionally, the installation illustrates the process of gamification whereby elements typical for games (points, levels, progress bars, percentages, awards) are transferred to a new environment and game and everyday life literally overlap. Thus, the work exerts its influence on individual behavior and motivation while at the same time addressing phenomena such as the commercialization and marketing of one's image. Thie's work explores the potential impact of user behavior in social media: exposed in the context of fantasy symbols, the characters are endowed with skills and considered a referent for self-promotion and marketing in a so-called »trading« of their person in social media.

In the work *The MacGuffin-Bloc* the artist **Mikka Wellner** references from pop culture and film history combine with the physiological process of seeing to create a sculptural and site-specific installation. The term »MacGuffin« was popularized by Alfred Hitchcock and describes an object (or person) that initiates and drives the plot of a film without itself being of any particular use. It is the unifying element that gives a story structure and credibility without having to be credible or meaningful.

In this work, it's manifested by a mirrored block that addresses visual perception, i.e. the processing of optical stimuli. Because visual perception goes beyond merely taking in information and initiates action, extracts relevant information, recognizes elements and interprets them by comparing them to other memories, the mirrors serve as a metaphor; during the act of seeing, it becomes a matter of choosing either the object or reflections of the environment. The object itself is a MacGuffin and therefore secondary. It prompts the viewer to think about his or her own process of seeing. This process is supported by a first-person narrative printed on the mirror. Yet the narrative doesn't make it clear who is actually speaking; instead, it fans speculation over whether it might be written from the perspective of an animal or a person. In its hermetic appearance, the block sees itself as a shelter. In the way a house protects us from the elements, a prison supposedly protects us from those imprisoned. It remains unclear, however, who is being protected here, and from whom.

In this work, the artist Mikka Wellner criticizes the belief in knowledge through progress and advocates a radical break with our (visual) habits. What are we looking at? And why? Who looks, who looks back, or in a reference to the comic inside the block: Who watches the Watchmen?

11/30/2019 3 – 4:30 pm
The Act of Doing Makes It (Feel Like) Becoming
by Gabriela Maria Dorniak

01/08/2020 7 – 10 pm
TheorieMittwoch
An evening on FanFiction and with FanReality
by Laura Eggert, Hannah Müller, Nele Stuhler

01/18/2020 7 – 10 pm
Powerbanks Screening
by and with Britta Thie

Artists

Andy Kassier

Andy Kassier, born 1989 in Berlin, studied at the Kunsthochschule Köln, among others with Johannes Wohnseifer and Mischa Kuball. In 2018 he graduated with a diploma in media art.

The aesthetics of prosperity, concepts of self-representation and the fascination of virtual identities and possibilities of representation created and recreated by the social network shape the pictorial language of Kassier's works. The boundaries between fiction and reality, art and life become blurred. The alter ego he creates ironically embodies the narratives of wealth and happiness in late capitalist society. The figure of Kassier is the personification of the false promise that money, power and belonging are accessible to all. Kassier works with photography, video, develops installations, sculptures and performances and has exhibited in Singapore, Cologne, London, Düsseldorf, Zurich, Winterthur and Berlin. Kassier's digital identities and performances also manifest themselves on social media sites like Facebook and Instagram.

www.andykassier.com

Bianca Kennedy

Bianca Kennedy was born in Leipzig in 1989, lives, and works in Berlin. In addition to the Athens School of Fine Arts, she also studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Munich and graduated with a master's degree from Klaus vom Bruch in 2017.

In her analytical stop-motion animations, she depicts the human abyss and regularly works on photographs and drawing series in which she stages miniatures she has created herself. Kennedy's has presented her animations, drawings and site-specific installations in numerous exhibitions, screenings and festivals. She has had solo exhibitions at the C-Gallery in Milan and the Alte Münze in Berlin, and received numerous prizes (such as the TOY Berlin Masters Award, Loop Discover Award Barcelona) and scholarships (such as the Studienstiftung des deutschen Volkes). Artist residencies have taken her to North America, Barcelona, Athens and Tokyo, and most recently to Künstlerhaus Lukas in Ahrenshoop.

www.biancakenedy.com

Felix Kraus / The Swan Collective

Felix Kraus *1986 born in Munich, is the founder of The Swan Collective and studied media art at the Academy of Fine Arts in Munich, the HFG Karlsruhe and the ASFA in Athens from 2007 to 2014.

Other members of The Swan Collective are Richard Tator, Miles Macre, Coca Lloyd and Nils Sanddorn. The group mixes various techniques such as virtual & augmented reality, literature, painting and paper embossing. The collective's has shown their works in institutions such as the Kunstmuseum Stuttgart, the CCBB Brazil, the Goethe-Institut Toronto, the Espronceda Barcelona, ZKM Karlsruhe and the Egyptian Museum Munich. His works are represented in the following collections: Kunstmuseum Stuttgart, Zabudowicz Collection London, Philara Collection, Edwin Scharff Museum, Porsche Collection, MACBA Barcelona. He has received scholarships, artist residencies at home and abroad, and numerous prizes. Most recently, Kraus and Kennedy received the 1st prize for ANIMALIA SUM at the Toronto New Wave Festival (2019).

www.felixkraus.com

Britta Thie

Britta Thie was born in 1987 in Minden and lives in Berlin. After her studies of fine arts, which she completed as a master student with the filmmaker Prof. Hito Steyerl at the UdK Berlin, she released her video-based works mostly via the Internet. From 2010 to 2011 she studied with a DAAD scholarship in New York at the Cooper Union for Science and Art. In 2016 and 2017 she was endowed professor for time-based media and performance at the Hochschule für Gestaltung Offenbach.

Thie describes being lost between virtuality, internationality and simultaneity. Her web series Translantics (2015, co-produced by Schirn Kunsthalle and ZDF/ARTE) uses the example of three young women to illuminate a generation that moves back and forth between the analogue past and the aesthetics of modern technologies. The artist showed this work as an installation in the Schinkel Pavillon in Berlin, in the video art collection Julia Stoschek and at film festivals (Forum des Images, Series Mania). In June 2018, her solo exhibition POWERBANKS opened at the Museum Abteiberg.

www.brittathie.tv

Mikka Wellner

Mikka Wellner, born in Berlin, studied at the HfBK Dresden from 2006 to 2011.

From 2011 to 2013 he was a master student of Prof. Eberhard Bosslet. He lives and works in Berlin.

His works combine references from history and culminate in site-specific, sculptural installations. He has received various scholarships. After solo exhibitions and exhibition participation in Istanbul, Beirut, Hamburg, Berlin, Halle, Frankfurt am Main and Amrum, among others, he recently presented his works in a solo exhibition at the Rockefeller Center in Dresden.

www.mikkawellner.de

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